



Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention

HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division
HIV/STD Epidemiology Division
HIV/STD Health Resources Division

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HIV/STD Policy No. 035.001

MODEL EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR USE BY EMPLOYERS TO EDUCATE EMPLOYEES ABOUT THE HIV DISEASE AND ITS PROGRESSIVE STAGES

PURPOSE

This policy provides Texas employers with rudimentary guidelines for developing and implementing a human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) employee education program. The program focuses on the behavior and activities of employees at work and the impact the disease has on employees. However, employers are urged to consider program content that includes behaviors and activities away from work that may expose an employee to the disease and affect work life.

BACKGROUND

One of the missions of the Texas Department of Health (TDH) Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention (Bureau) is to prevent, treat, and/or control the spread of HIV and AIDS (the HIV disease in its advanced stage). TDH has the legislative direction and authority to act as the focal point to develop model HIV and AIDS education programs for the public. State law requires that employees of a health care facility licensed by TDH, the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation or the Texas Department of Human Services complete an educational course about the HIV disease. This course must be based on a model education program developed by the Bureau.

AUTHORITY

Health and Safety Code, Title I, §§ 85.01 - 85.10

THE VALUE OF AN EMPLOYEE EDUCATION PROGRAM

An employee education program is an excellent opportunity to promote understanding and prevention of HIV/AIDS as well as reducing fear and misinformation. An employee education program can also clarify issues about workplace rights and responsibilities related to HIV/AIDS. A basic employee education program will:

- 1) give accurate answers to basic employee questions about HIV/AIDS transmission, risk and prevention;
- 2) discuss employer and employee rights and responsibilities, issues related to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, medical confidentiality and reasonable accommodation;
- 3) help all employees understand they can work safely alongside persons living with the HIV disease;

- 4) promote a compassionate environment for employees living with HIV/AIDS by giving information about local resources, counseling, testing or support, and
- 5) provide up to date, continuing education about HIV/AIDS.

INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IN THE EMPLOYEE EDUCATION PROGRAM

- 1) How the HIV disease is transmitted
- 2) Misconceptions about HIV transmission
- 3) How HIV transmission can be prevented, or the risks reduced
- 4) Laws and regulations governing risky behaviors related to HIV/AIDS
- 5) Company or agency materials on policies and procedures for handling HIV/AIDS in the workplace
- 6) Confidentiality and privacy requirements and agreements
- 7) Lists of HIV/AIDS prevention or treatment resources in the company and the community

EDUCATIONAL METHODS

Outstanding programs are ongoing and include discussion of issues affecting all employees. Programs should answer employee questions, clarify the company's position on HIV/AIDS, provide guidance and build a safe, supportive employee environment.

Small group meetings are encouraged to enable the educator and employees to discuss many issues. Employers may involve labor groups, employee committees, or community experts. Brochures, videos and other materials are available from the Bureau to reinforce and supplement small-group meetings.

INVOLVE THE EMPLOYEE'S FRIENDS AND FAMILY

During an HIV/AIDS education program, educators should encourage employees to share information with friends and family members. Sharing prevention information can increase awareness and reduce the risk of HIV infection, especially among young persons below 18 years of age.

TRAINING FOR MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISORY PERSONNEL

Management staff may be fearful, misinformed, or have widely varying knowledge about HIV; however, staff must be able to deal with employee concerns about HIV, and properly administer HIV/AIDS policies and procedures. A training program for managers should include:

- 1) current information about HIV transmission and prevention;
- 2) laws about confidentiality and related topics;
- 3) personnel management, including relevant policies;
- 4) development of staff problem-solving skills;

- 5) a plan for periodic training;
- 6) information for employee referrals for assistance, and
- 7) information, along with a demonstration, on the proper use of universal precautions.

DEVELOPING THE EMPLOYER HIV/AIDS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Employers are encouraged to contact the Bureau by calling (512) 490-2535 or writing to the Bureau's Training and Public Education Branch at 1100 W. 49th, Austin TX 78756-9987 for information, pamphlets and other educational materials. Employers may call the Texas HIV/STD InfoLine at 1-800-299-AIDS (2437) for information about education resources in the local community. Information and educational materials may also be obtained by referring to the Bureau's Internet web site at www.tdh.state.tx.us/hivstd. Other options include: contacting the CDC AIDS hotline at 1-800-342-AIDS (2437) or writing to the CDC National AIDS Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 6003, Rockville, MD 20849-6003 for information; contacting the local chapter of the American Red Cross which provides a workplace HIV/AIDS educational program.

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November 13, 2002 Converted format from WordPerfect to Word.

REVISIONS

Page 3, line 11 Changed "Texas AIDS Hotline" to "Texas HIV/STD InfoLine"